

King Edward 7th

Reigned January 22nd 1901–May 6th 1910



King Edward 7th



Difficultly sorting the shades has always been an issue for philatelists. Leading stamp authorities identify that distinguishing the colour and shades of the eighteen officially issued stamps, by fully understanding the printers, is the best method to sort and classify the issues.

Sorting mint examples is easier than used. However with care and diligence this can be achieved.

King Edward 7th



Nicknamed “Tum Tum” he returned the monarchy to favour with the general public at large, although his family nickname was “Bertie”. The eldest surviving son of Queen Victoria acceded the throne at his mother’s deathbed on January 22nd 1901. His reign lasted until his death on May 6th, 1910 when his only son, King George V ascended his Father’s throne.

His philatelic legacy was to continue the traditions of his late mother and so D.L.R. re-used the vignettes from the royal jubilee series with changing colours. The only foray into stamp design was a few very rare essays using the designs from the stamps issued in South Africa. Errors are also very rare.

Which printer is the question?



Printers – a Brief History

De La Rue

De La Rue printings from 1/1/1899 until 12/31/1910.

Half Penny changes from green to yellow green in November 1904 to aid manual sorting (Postmaster confusion).

Yellow Green



Four Penny changes from bi-colour to orange for the same reason.



All printings (With the exception of the 3p yellow paper) are issued on white paper starting in 1899. In 1905 De La Rue switches to chalk surfaced paper.

How to identify Chalk surfaced paper?

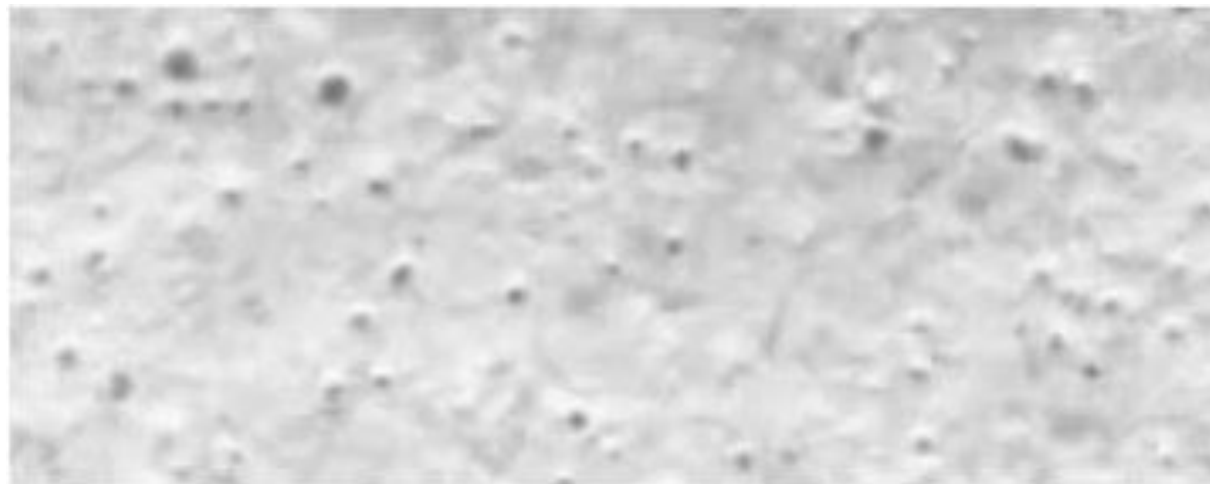
1. Use a silver tester (Usually German silver). It acts like a pencil. If it leaves a grey line then the paper is chalk surfaced, no line = ordinary paper. A good very soft eraser removes the line. Tricky to conduct and it defaces the stamp if your not careful. **NOT FAILSAFE!**



This is an example of Nickel Silver Brazing rods taken from Ebay. The exact chemical composition is not critical to what we are doing.

How to identify Chalk surfaced paper?

2. Use magnification You will need a 25X magnifier to see the chalk on the surface (Looks like bubbles)



How to identify Chalk surfaced paper?

3. Use your lower lip. The surface of chalk surfaced paper leaves a smooth impression. Chalk surfaced paper always has a sheen visible to the naked eye when held at an angle. Your lower lip can also detect this difference. Look at the perfs, the chalk coating sometimes chips off in the corners revealing the colour of the paper underneath.

Chalk Surface sheen



4. Check for printing sharpness. The colours of ink on chalk surfaced paper appear brighter/stronger. The chalk prevents the ink from spreading into the fibres of the paper and thus creates a sharper image.

*How to
identify
Chalk
surfaced
paper?*



This is non-chalk surfaced paper at 25X magnification, The ink has migrated through the adjacent fibres.

How to identify Chalk surfaced paper?

The use of chalk surfaced paper created technical challenges. The tonnage required to stamp the images was increased so as to ensure that the ink penetrated the chalk surface and paper evenly and fully. This tonnage increase will show up as a reverse impression on the back of the stamp on the De La Rue issues. Easier to detect on mint copies than on used examples but seen on both types.



Therefore all stamps postmarked prior to November 1904 are De La Rue on ordinary paper. Issues after this date are on chalk surfaced paper. [Building a reference collection is a great tool to help distinguish the differences.](#) *Only De La Rue produces official overprinted stamps which are withdrawn in 1904. All DLR printings are on "High finish" paper and have the highest quality/sharpness to them.*

Harrison & Sons

King Edward VII dies in May 1910. De La Rue's contract ends on 12/31/1910. Between 12/31/1910 and mid February 1911 the printing plates are re-glazed, re-touched (Repaired) and re-cut. This results in early Harrison printings having deeper lines in some areas (More intense colour). The printing plates are the property of the Crown Estate and as such pass to Harrisons for the single colour varieties, but since Harrison is incapable of multi colour registration, the multi colour plates & high values are sent to Somerset House, the main government printing location. The first Harrison printings are postmarked March 5th 1911.

Harrison & Sons Continued.

Both Harrison and Somerset House use flat ordinary paper, *with the exception of the sixpenny value printed by Somerset House*, since the supply of chalk surfaced paper & printing a clean image is a challenge and they do not have the experience or understanding of DLR in paper preparation. The Harrison printings of KE7 end in 1912. It's understood that the printing of KE7 stamps ran concurrently with the Downey head stamps, produced bearing the image of King George Fifth so there is a period of less than a year where there is overlap. **Why?** Well the new Downey head printing plates were of Harrison origin and were nowhere as sophisticated as the DLR produced plates (Still single colour images) so combined with teething problems, a change in watermark and very low public opinion of the Downey Head stamps, production was suppressed in the face of growing demand thus the stamps of KE7 filled a need. Harrisons experience was so lacking that the Downey head plates were trialed at Somerset House before production got underway.

Somerset House

The government printing location in Central London had both the equipment and the expertise to print postage stamps but was constrained by the sheer workload from other departments. Using De La Rue dies (But not the same paper supply) these printings always lack the crispness and sharpness of the DLR issues. The paper used to print these stamps reflected the general purchase supply at the time. Later trials with coated paper for the 6d are rare and sought after.

Paper Problems.

Gibbons notes that DLR printings were on “High finish” paper whereas the other printers used “Flat” paper. Inferior paper used by printers other than DLR, caused the inks to migrate/spread. If the press tonnage was too high it caused the watermark to be obliterated and when the tonnage was too low the printings were light and colour was varied or was missing. The exact paper preparation process by DLR is unknown but it did result in the highest quality printings.

Reference Collection

These both must be Harrison, the lower date is the key and the poor centering on the 4d is a giveaway. On the 2½d example the fuzzy printing is the key identifier.



Perforations can help!

All De La Rue printings are 14x14, Harrisons are 14X14 and later are 15X14 (Note after March 5th, 1911 only). Somerset House are always 14X14 also.

Shades of colour exist. This Stanley Gibbons colour key is a great tool, along with a solid reference collection, to help sort shades



Quality control at De La Rue was very high, from the thickness of the paper, to the shading of the ink, to the registration, it was all tightly controlled building on decades of experience printing Victorian stamps to very high standards witnessed by the almost complete lack of commercially available errors on the market (Usually watermark inversions). DLR refused to drop the price and so the contract switched based upon cost alone. Harrisons was another story entirely and in 1911 would go on to become a printing powerhouse with high quality, *eventually*. Somerset House were the least careful as this was another inter-governmental job they never asked for that barely lasted three years (1911-1913). Within a short period of time during King George V's reign, Somerset House ceases to produce postage stamps at all.

A reference collection is a must. Used battered/ripped/torn/worn/holed/scuffed examples come in very handy for identification!



★ De La Rue issues, cleaner, sharper and deeper in colour.

De La Rue Issues—collectable shades shown only!



Harrisons 14 x 14 (Not all shades depicted)



Harrisons
15 x 14
(Not all
shades
shown)



Somerset House 14 x 14 (Note the shades)



Somerset House 14 x 14



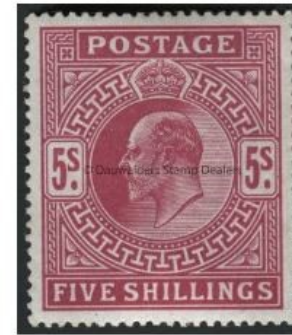
Available to order
SG315 2s6d Dull Greyish



Available to order
SG316 2s6d Dull Reddish



Available to order
SG317 2s6d Dark Purple



Available to order
SG318 5s Carmine



Available to order
SG319 10s Blue



Available to order
SG320 £1 Deep Green

Building a reference collection—A MUST HAVE

1. Obtain copies of the 2½d, 3d and 4d Perf 15X14 stamps. These must be **Harrison**.
2. Obtain as many overprinted stamps as you can. These must be **De La Rue**
3. Collect stamps in any condition with clear date stamps.
4. “Common” shades between printers exist although these are limited. These shared shades include the 4d, 6d, 7d, 5s, 10s & £1
5. Sort the 6d values carefully. Somerset house printings on chalk surfaced paper have much higher values than those from De La Rue. There are two types of Somerset House coated issues, the most valuable does not respond to the silver test so magnification is a must.

General Notes:

Nickel silver, maillechort, German silver, ^[1] **argentan,** ^[1] **new silver,** ^[1] **nickel brass,** ^[2] **albata,** ^[3] or **alpacca** ^[4] is a [copper alloy](#) with [nickel](#) and often [zinc](#). The usual formulation is 60% copper, 20% nickel and 20% zinc. ^[5] Nickel silver does not contain the element [silver](#). It is named for its silvery appearance, which can make it attractive as a cheaper and more durable substitute. It is also well suited for being [plated](#) with silver.

Pulled from Wikipedia.



Current owner

Left, Tyrian Plum printing trial, right proposed essay to replace the definitives that escaped.



Colour trials and proofs are nearly always in a different colour or produced on card stock.





Likely De La Rue



Likely Harrison's

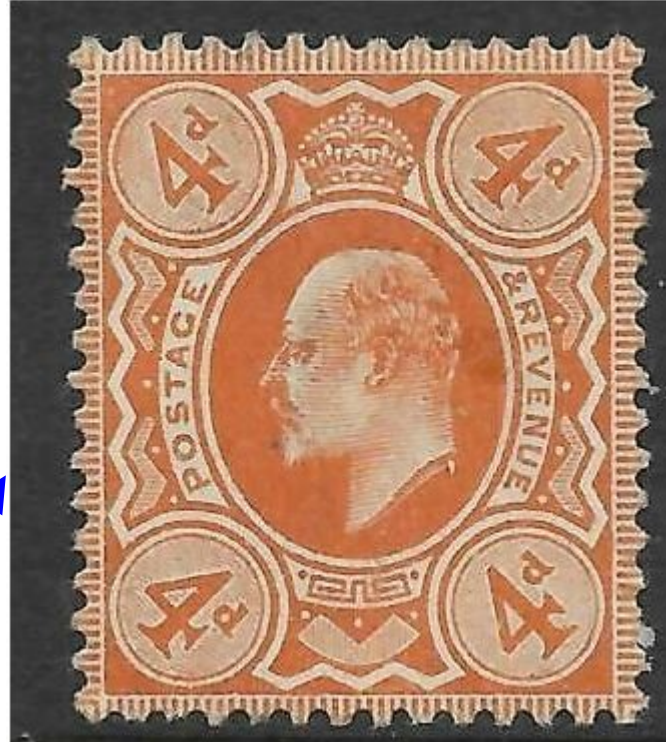
Booklets are produced by both printers, the outer cover is a good way to distinguish if its still present, Gum helps too, DLR is thick and yellow, Harrison's is transparent as is S.H.



**The rarest King Edward stamp known to exist,
Now owned by Stanley Gibbons Ltd. Estimated
value is \$3,000,000+**



Harrison Printings



De La Rue-
Printings





£11



£50



£107

COLOUR Matters



Top: De La Rue, Dull Green and Carmine on Ordinary paper

Centre, left to right: De La Rue, Dull Green and Scarlet, Deep Dull Green and Scarlet; on Chalk-surfaced paper

Bottom, left to right: Somerset House, Deep Green and Scarlet, Green and Scarlet, Green and Carmine.



THANK YOU!

Mark Cooper.

KPS Webmaster.